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ABSTRACT

Various groups of Native American peoples and other non-English speakers are required to become literate in English and are promised that literacy will solve their social, economic, and political problems. Yet, having achieved some level of English literacy, many of these people find that not much has changed. The educational system attributes their lack of success to something "wrong" with the learners. The problem, however, is more complex, having roots in the way educational planners go about their business, in the history of written language, and in a general failure to perceive that various forms of written language serve different purposes. The absence of literacy is a natural human condition, and literacy is a complex and rich technology that is useful only under certain conditions. Government-supported language planning is fraught with dangers. Governments often have accepted the notion that monolingual literacy is desirable, ignoring the fact that orality and literacy serve different societal functions and that a lack of fit may exist between the dominant language and a minority (oral) language with regard to minority community needs. Other policy problems lie in the inability of the education sector to permeate an entire culture, the lack of written materials in certain languages, and the fact that process-based literacy training provides functional skills but not access to the language used in societal power structures. Policy suggestions for bilingual education in Alaska and the preservation of Native American languages are included. This paper contains 32 references. (SV)

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Literacy, Language Planning and Pedagogy[1]

A talk presented by
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Abstract: What does it mean to "make someone literate"? What is it that a "literate" person should be able to read, and for what purpose? In what language or variety should a person be able to read? How do education agencies go about answering these questions and, having answered them, how do education agencies go about devising curricula to achieve the objectives implicit in the answers, and how do they determine whether the students being treated through the system are achieving? In the following discussion, I would like to address these issues and to suggest some possible approaches. But I would call attention to the fact that, to all intents and purposes, I am an alien in Alaska; I do not vote here, nor pay my taxes here, nor do my children go to school here, so it is entirely possible that I have too little knowledge of the local problems to be able to address them usefully.

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In the collection of short stories entitled The Ebony Tower(1974), John Fowles[2] (who also wrote *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) includes a story with the intriguing title "Poor Koko." The story concerns an unnamed narrator who is a "scholar" working on "...a definitive biography and critical account of Thomas Love Peacock..." (139), a less well-known British novelist who lived from 1785 to 1866. The narrator has rented a remote cottage in North Dorset (in the south of England) from friends with the intent of spending time alone working intensively on his manuscript. On the second night of his stay in Holly Cottage, he is awakened in the night by a burglar. The burglar, astonished to find the cottage occupied, is very civil to the scholar, assuring him that he has no wish to harm him. At the same time, having come far to commit his burglary, the burglar is not to be deterred. The burglar convinces the scholar that he must tie him up in order to make his escape, and the scholar--not inclined to physical violence --agrees. Once the scholar is tied up, the burglar proceeds to take what he wishes and, while he collects his booty, the two chat amiably. However, before he leaves, the burglar deliberately burns the scholar's manuscript--four-year's work--page by page, right before his eyes. After the burglar leaves, the scholar spends some unpleasant hours, but he is rescued from his plight the following morning. The remainder of the story traces the stages of the scholar's psychological state from hatred for the burglar and a strong desire for revenge to a more accepting condition and a need to understand *why* the burglar felt compelled to burn the manuscript. The scholar says:

> I must have appeared to the boy as one who deprived him of a secret --and one he secretly wanted to possess. That rather angry declaration of at least some respect for books; that distinctly wistful desire to write a book himself (to "tell it how it really is"--as if the poverty of that phrase did not *ab initio* castrate the wish it implied!); that striking word-deed paradox in the situation, the civil chat while he went around the room robbing; that surely not quite unconscious incoherence in his views; that refusal to hear, seemingly even to understand, my mildly raised objections; that jumping from one thing to another ... all these made the burning of my book only too justly symbolic in his eyes. What was really being burned was my generation's "refusal" to hand down a kind of magic (174).

In an important paper, Martin (in press), the Australian linguist, makes the point that the Aboriginal people of Australia perceive formal

Figure 1

Variability in Oral Culture and Literate Culture Power Values

Oral Culture	Literate Culture
Decision Making	
One only knows what one can recall.	One has access to all information, once it has been recorded.
Power discourse is spoken only by those who have the right to speak and the right to decide.	Power discourse is written by those representing power institutions. Institutions make decisions, not individuals.
Negotiation	
The spoken word in negotiations is considered carefully. It constitutes the only message. It must have a high perceived truth value. Masagara (1991) has shown that some cultures use "traditional oath forms" to validate the truth value of a spoken message, each individual in a community having an "ultimate oath form."	The spoken word is not as carefully articulated as the written word. It is not the final message. It does not need to have a high perceived truth value. The truth value of an utterance exists only when the message is written and the written version is subjected to scrutiny. [English speakers say "Get it in writing!" and "Show it to me in writing!"] The only verifiable truth lies in the written text.
Issues are resolved quickly through personal, face-to-face negotiation with practical limitations on the size of the negotiating network.	Issues are resolved slowly through depersonalized committees and legal structures with little practical limit on the size of the negotiating network.
Contract Making	
Once agreed upon, a spoken contract between those who have the right to speak is locked in memory.	Once agreed upon, a spoken contract is only validateable through the renegotiation of a written contract. That contract, or demand, becomes more powerful when it is "published" by institutions and locked in institutional archival memory.
Power discourse must be stored in memory. Consequently, it is structured in such a way that it is easy to retain it in memory and to recall it. Thus, additive relationships and repetition are favored in such discourse.	Power discourse is packed with complex subordinated and nominalized language, in which processes, qualities, quantities, logical relationships, and assessments are expressed as nouns or adjectives (Martin in press).
There is a general past or present orientation in the discourse.	There is a major focus (a promisory focus) on the future in the discourse.

written varieties of English as what he calls a "secret" code--a magic language which empowers those who have it and isolates those who do not. Eggington (1990) carries the point even further, supplying a chart (Figure 1) comparing the functions of formal written language in a literate culture and any oral language in an orate culture. In

their article on the problems of orality and literacy among the Toba of Chaco Province, Argentina, Messineo and Wright (1989) make several points: namely that Spanish literacy does not accord well with Toba oracy and that the richness in social, cultural, and political aspects of Toba phenomenology may not be expressable in Spanish while the richness of Spanish literacy may have little meaning for the Toba. In an article discussing language policy and planning in Latin America, I (Kaplan 1991) have claimed that the Spanish necessary to achieve political equity is not available to the Toba; that is, formal written Spanish is a "secret" language to which the Toba do not have access.

Introduction:

These disparate examples speak to what I understand to be the situation in Alaska. Here, various groups of Native American peoples and other groups of speakers of languages other than English are required to become literate in English; they are promised that literacy will solve their problems--that literacy[3] will open the doors of social and economic equity and political power. Yet many people find that, having achieved some level of literacy in English, nothing much happens; they go on living in the same places, doing the same sorts of work they have been doing, having basically the same relationship with the dominant English-speaking community, experiencing essentially the same socio-economic problems. And they are disenchanted, frustrated, even angry; they see little point in pursuing English literacy; they do badly on standardized tests and find themselves locked into a cyclical process from which there seems to be no escape. (I do not mean to suggest that the condition described occurs in 100% of instances; some do succeed, but it is the view of the education establishment that some do not succeed because they do not achieve *appropriate* levels of literacy.) The English-speaking educational structure looks upon them with wonder. "Why?" says the educational system; "Why do these people not pursue the opportunities we offer them?" "Why do they not succeed in our schools?" "What's wrong?" The implication is that there is something "wrong" with the learners. The problem is more complex, having roots in the way educational planners go about their business, in the history of written language, and in a general failure to perceive what literacy means--that is, a failure to understand what forms of written language serve what purposes for what segments of the population under what circumstances.

There is yet another, non-trivial problem; that is, the metaphor through which literacy training is approached. This metaphor is not peculiar to Alaska; it pervades official U. S. approaches to literacy. The metaphor is what I'd like to call the "disease metaphor." In this metaphor, the absence of literacy is described and perceived as a kind of "sickness"; the provision of literacy training is perceived as a "treatment" to

eradicate the disease. The slogans in the literacy business reinforce the metaphor; we talk about "stamping out illiteracy," as, a century ago, we talked about stamping out yellow fever, or more recently about eradicating polio and measles. The notion seems to be that, if a child is innoculated early enough with a "literacy shot," the problem will disappear. Of course, illiteracy is not a disease, and literacy is not a cure. A serious problem derives from the fact that both literacy practitioners and their "patients" come to hold the same view: literacy practitioners see themselves as engaged in a crusade to eradicate an ill, while the recipients of training see themselves as "diseased" and in need of a "cure." Both teacher and student oversimplify the problem. As I will try to show, the absence of literacy is the natural human condition, literacy is a complex and rich technology which is useful only under certain conditions, and the problem is not a simple one.

There is a discipline known as language planning which may offer some solutions. But language planning has limitations; it has not, for example, been much practiced in the U.S., except perhaps in a negative sense--in the half-century long supression of Native American languages, for example. Even educational organizations do not give language planning much attention; rather, they need to have visible outcomes--results on standardized tests, evidence of educational "success." Where language planning has been undertaken, it has been the work of western scholars who have had a somewhat liberal orientation; that is, they have planned in the belief that the outcomes would be beneficial to everyone concerned. It is only fair to point out that language planning can be used just as effectively to eradicate minority languages or to increase governmental control over an entire population. There is nothing inherent in the practice of language planning that assures a fair and equitable outcome for an entire population. Furthermore, language planning is inherently afflicted with *emic/etic* problems; an individual who lives outside a particular community must be exposed to that community for a very long time before s/he can claim to have a genuine understanding of the community--that is, such an individual may be blinded by the value presuppositions s/he bring with him/her--while an individual who lives inside a community can sometimes see things exclusively in terms of that community--that is, such an individual may be blinded by the value presuppositions of that community. In sum, the practice of language planning is fraught with dangers; yet it is probably the best mechanism presently available to solve some of the problems multilingual societies face.

Definitions:

Language planning is, by definition, an attempt by some group to intervene in the language development of a community and to alter the language behavior of some population of speakers in some particular direction, usually conceived as somehow intended to improve the conditions of that population whose language is being planned. Because the speaker populations involved generally tend to be minorities embedded within a larger population, and because the activities subsumed in such planning tend to be extremely complex, it is usually government at some level that is involved in the planning activity. But churches, multinational corporations, and many other agencies may become involved. Governments, particularly, customarily engage in several kinds of planning.

Two broad areas of planning fall under the jurisdiction of governments in the usual course of events: 1.) natural-resource development planning and 2.) human-resource development planning. Natural-resource development planning normally implicates efforts to develop natural resources for the good of the whole population; thus, governments build dams to control water distribution and facilitate agriculture and to increase available hydro-electric power, or they build fish hatcheries to support the fishing industry, or promulgate regulations over private-sector exploitation of such commodities as aluminum, gold, oil, silver, and tin, and so on. Human-resource development planning implicates the planning of the uses of human beings within a state for the general benefit of the state; it involves developing some assurance that there will be enough engineers, or teachers, or doctors to serve the needs of the population, and it sometimes involves tampering with the language(s) of the community. It is more complex in the sense that it takes longer (e.g., it may take a decade to build a dam, but it takes several generations to affect language change), and it deals with a far more sensitive domain--the manipulation of human attitudes and attributes. Furthermore, governments are far less experienced at human-resource development planning than they are at natural-resource development planning; natural resources have long been perceived as sources of wealth, while human beings, for most of the course of recorded history, have been left largely to their own devices. Only in rare instances--for example, in the matter of slavery, and of course in the matter of maintaining a military force--have governments tended to become directly involved in human-resource development planning activities. However, in the 20th century--one marked by extraordinary dislocations of population (it has been called, by TIME, "the age of the refugee") and by radical shortening of communication lines--governments have become increasingly involved in human-resource development planning. The

century has also been characterized by the assumption that human-resource development planning is not only the proper concern of government, but that national development implicates human-resource development planning virtually to the same extent that it implicates natural-resource development planning (Kaplan 1989).

One of the areas in which governmental activity has become obtrusive is the area of language use. Sometime in the recent past, governments have accepted the notion that monolingualism is desirable in a polity because it facilitates the promulgation of the myth of a common ancestry (or at least of a common culture), encourages unity within the population, and increases the government's ability to communicate with all the people, presumably to augment the government's ability to control a variety of societal phenomena. In the history of western Europe, the notion of monolingual states took hold in the 16th and 17th centuries but, despite their efforts at mono-lingualism, England still has to deal with the dissidence of the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh, France with that of the Basques and the Bretons, and Germany with that of the Danes, the Frisians, and others; the Balkan countries are, of course, marked by a pattern of multilingual instability, and the ex-colonial territories in Africa and Asia (and in Alaska) exist within boundaries quite arbitrarily drawn by Europeans, which tended to create extremely multilingual units (e.g., Indonesia and Cameroon each with something like 250 languages) and to disregard the historical distribution of populations. These newer nations have struggled, since independence, with the problem of a national language. Particularly in societies in which the citizenry votes, there has been perceived a need to have all citizens able to read about the issues, to understand both the issues and the positions of individual candidates, and to participate actively in the process of selecting their leaders by voice and vote, almost always in a single language (e.g., the plebiscite promised by the UN to determine the will of the people of Namibia was long delayed because of the difficulty of determining in which language that plebiscite would be held). In these instances, governments have promulgated not only the idea of monolingualism but also of literacy. To a large extent this has also been the case in Alaska, purchased from Russia in 1867, and granted statehood in 1959. As I have already pointed out, a negative view of illiteracy is widely held, quite at odds with the human condition, and a metaphor is in wide use which is quite at odds with reality,(Scribner 1984). Reality can perhaps be suggested by the following quotation from a study by Patthey-Chavez:

> In a sense, all of language aims to establish joint cognition by externalizing the inner meditations of individual human beings. Individual experiences are reproduced verbally, and through these

> means are shared and universalized. But their externalization through verbal reproduction [oral or written] is, of course, only half the story: without attentive listeners/readers, experiences are lost, not shared... Viewed in these terms, the oft-noticed elusiveness (or flight) of meaning begins to make sense: 'meaning between people is simply never complete until...**the linguistic tool is suited to its dialectic function** [emphasis added, RBK]. Meaning is incomplete because it is only completed during meaning-making interaction. Language is maximally adaptive: its very fuzziness allows it to be used over and over in a wide variety of contexts, by users who shape their language to their many communicative purposes. At the same time, the use of a shared code between interlocutors assures a certain historical continuity, a rootedness in a common past, while the necessity to negotiate meaning again in each interaction forces the active participation of meaning-makers in the maintenance of that past (1990, Ch.2, p.6; cf., Holquist (1981), Leont'ev (1981), Luria (1978), Vygotsky (1986)).

The real-world problem to which this quotation calls attention is the lack of fit between the language of a minority group and the monolingual form which a government may be attempting to superimpose on the whole society but particularly on minority groups. It is possible to posit the notion that each language is the ideal means for a community of speakers to deal with the phenomenological world in which it lives and with all those who also live in that community. But such a code may be unsuited for a particular embedded community to deal with the phenomenological world of the dominant community. The problem inherent in the question of fit between two linguistic systems has already been demonstrated in the illustrations with which I began this talk.

WHAT IS THE PRECISE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM?

There are several strands to the problem. It may be useful to try to tease them apart (cf., Kaplan 1986a; 1986b; 1984). First, there is the matter of the history of human language. For something on the order of four and a half million years, humanids have been developing the use of language. Our earliest humanid ancestors, the Australopithicines whose remains have been found in the Olduvai Gorge in Africa, apparently shared several characteristics with modern human beings: they were communal hunters often hunting animals much larger than themselves; they were nomadic; they were territorial, and they had the most slowly developing young in the animal king-

dom. The practice of communal hunting requires the development of some sort of fairly sophisticated call system; communal hunters must be able to signal each other through space of their exact location, their direction and speed of movement, their relationship to the game being hunted, and their intentions. The characteristic of nomadism together with the characteristic of territoriality requires the development of an ability to abstract the map of the territory occupied and to carry that map around in the mind; it further requires the ability to apply the map to new territories as the group moves following the game on which it depends. (It is the case that Athabascan people, among others, participated in such a life style.) The characteristic of a slowly developing young derives from the fact that, while even newly born elephants are ready to move with the herd within a very short time after their birth, human offspring need to be tended and protected for quite a number of years--a notion extravagently exaggerated to twenty years or more in contemporary society. This characteristic creates a need for some sort of communal specialization (e.g., into those who hunt and those who stay behind to care for the very young and the very old) and some sort of communication system that will permit teaching the young before they are physically ready to participate in adult activities. All of these characteristics combined to create an evolutionary pressure for language development.

Despite that pressure, human language as we know it developed very slowly over a very long period of time. The archeological evidence (size of the brain cavity, size and shape of the buccal cavity) suggests that human speech as we think of it did not evolve until about 100,000 years ago. That evolutionary development gradually became part of the human genetic baggage. All human beings within the normative ranges speak; indeed, we identify those who are abnormal by virtue of the fact that they cannot speak at all or that their speech is somehow deviant. For long periods of human history, such aberrant individuals were destroyed; they were removed from the pool of potentially interbreeding populations--their genes from the communal genepool--and the resulting selection pressure increased the probability of the evolution of language as a characteristic of the species.[4] Certainly, at the present time, both in theory and within the limits of observation, no human population has ever been recorded that does not have speech, and speech is a characteristic of normative populations around the world. All human children within the normative ranges appear to be born with a biologically conditioned predisposition to acquire language. Apparently, the only thing necessary to trigger that predisposition is the presence in the environment of a language. Once triggered, the predisposition causes children to acquire language in a manner that seems self-appetitive, self-rewarding, and consequently

self-motivating; indeed, it is extremely difficult to arrest the process once it has been started. Adults seem equally conditioned to support children in this acquisition process through such structures as mother/child communication. In fact, within the first couple of years of life, children acquire, essentially of their own volition, the entire linguistic system of a language (or perhaps of two languages), needing only minor adjustment, which occurs in their gradual socialization to their culture; this is a feat which appears not to be replicable at any other time in life.

But this discussion relates only to spoken language. Several post-biological evolutionary stages have occurred in recent human history. They are *post-biological* because they did not occur across all human populations and obviously have not become part of the human evolutionary baggage. (Human beings are not born with the ability to read and write, and literacy must be learned anew in every generation.) They have occurred over decreasing sub-sets of the total human population, and they have developed over a relatively short time, in historical terms. The first of these post-biological phenomena occurred on the order of 10,000 years ago, when some sub-set of human beings invented writing -or, to put in another way, introduced a new technology at least as significant as the invention of the wheel or the harnessing of fire. It is important to note that different groups, at about the same time, discovered various ways of representing speech visually--pictographic, syllabic, and alphabetic representations. It is also important to note that this ability to represent language visually has not, over time, dispersed through the entire human species but has remained limited, though the limits are constantly expanding. The second post-biological event occurred about 1,000 years ago, when some smaller sub-set of human beings invented the capability to represent speech in writing quickly--that is, they invented **printing**. In one sense, of course, printing is merely another technology, but the availability of that technology created a situation in which the visual representation of language could be disseminated over time and space relatively more quickly and efficiently to a potentially (and eventually) much larger segment of the population. The most recent of these post-biological phenomena has occurred within the life-time of everyone in this audience. It was the invention of electronic word-processing. Again, this change, occurring in a still smaller sub-set of the total human population, may be viewed as merely a technological development, but it has such significance for some segments of the human species that it cannot be dismissed as a mere technological improvement; it has the potential to divide human populations in critical ways. The introduction of each of these remarkable technologies has dram-

technologies has dram-atically altered the human condition (see Kaplan 1988: 41-42; 1986b).

The availability of these technologies has important implications for language itself and for some users of language. In societies in which information is not visually maintained but rather is maintained in oral memory, facts are variable and truth is mutable. The owner of memory must retrieve information variably, depending on the audience for whom the retrieval occurs, the circumstances under which it occurs, and the condition of the owner of the memory. Furthermore, the owner of the memory has important social status in the society. Once language can be visually represented, it can be retrieved any number of times, in precisely the same way, over time and space. Contemporary readers can if they know Classical Greek, read Plato in the original, exactly as it was presented thousands of years ago and thousands of miles away. Once language can be visually encoded, it becomes fixed; facts become invariable (because they can be looked up) and truth becomes immutable (because the facts on which it is based are always verifiable). And the social structure changes; there is a different set of knowledge gatekeepers.

Some scholars (e.g., Goody and Watt 1988, Havelock 1988, Ong 1988; 1967) have claimed that there is a great psychological divide between those who are literate and those who are not. This seems to me an unnecessary overstatement of the case. It is not necessary to posit a psychological divide to recognize that the availability of literacy makes certain special contributions to communities which have it. Literate populations behave differently; they do not have different brains. Ong (1967) has, however, probably correctly identified a taxonomy of cultures with respect to literacy: orate cultures (which depend exclusively on spoken language), transitional cultures (which fall into two sub-categories: 1.) those which are making initial steps toward literacy, and 2.) those which are residual-oral, being largely dependent on written language but having retained some key oral registers), literate cultures (those primarily dependent on written language), and post-literate cultures (those which, having been literate for some time, have been invaded by a secondary oracy through such media as radio and television in which it appears that text is orate while it is in fact written and read to make it appear oral--for example, the regular nightly television news in most nations). It can be demonstrated that written language has taken on certain functions that oral languages does not serve (e.g., Bazerman 1983, Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987, Bizzell 1982), for example, the whole area of legal and scientific activities. It can also be demonstrated that there are significant differences between written and spoken registers, at least in English, at the present time (see Biber 1988, Grabe 1987). It is

possible to speculate, though the evidence is not conclusive, that orate societies do not have access to all of the functions available in literate societies, or at least do not have access in precisely the same way or to the same extent, and literate societies do not have access to all of the functions available in orate societies.

It is clear that, when information is retained in memory, text has to be constructed in such a way as to facilitate memorization; not only are such features as repetition and additive relationships common (see Figure 1), but a great many tropes, rhythm, rhyme, and various other features normally characterized as *conversational* occur (see Eggington 1990, Montaño-Harmon 1988). Oral language is, in addition, accompanied by a complex set of paralinguistic features--intonation, body posture, eye-contact, touch, gesture--which written language must abridge in other ways. Further, not only is written text likely to be differently structured, but the existence of written text makes extensive commentary possible (e.g., the commentaries on the written Bible, or on Shakespeare's plays, or on the whole body of precedent-based law)--an added body of text which far exceeds the length of the original and which constitutes the major context in which the original can be verified, discussed, and interpreted.

THE FAILURES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

There are several other problems to discuss. First, governments have not, generally, recognized the degree to which a language issue permiates a society; consequently, they have tended to require solutions through the education sector. That is, schools have been asked to teach the "standard" language to everyone. But the obvious problem here is that not everyone goes to school in some societies; even if everyone goes to school, everyone does not do so at one time (so that inculcation through the school system requires several generations). Even when everyone goes to school at some point in life, the education sector has not been successful in reaching all learners--that after all is the point of this conference. Further, the education sector does not possess the resources to permiate the entire culture.

This latter problem is particularly intractable. Various segments in a modern society may conduct their own educational functions; e.g., the military and the civil service, as well as entities concerned with religion, foreign trade, tourism, international cooperation, and diplomacy, etc. These educational functions may be at odds with the functions of the education sector; e.g., the education sector may, as in the case of Australia (LoBianco 1987), teach the common European languages (i.e., French, German, Spanish), but the needs of the foreign trade sector may lie with quite different languages (i.e., Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese). In such an environment, the education sector may be unable to respond even when it wishes to because it does not

command an appropriate cadre of trained teachers and does not have easy access to appropriate materials and assessment instruments. Under the best of circumstances, the education sector is likely to lack the fiscal resources to engage in pre-service and in-service teacher training to establish or maintain appropriate language and pedagogical competence; it may lack the ability to develop curricular and assessment resources or even to disseminate existing materials through the system; it certainly lacks the ability to modify parental attitudes and to create incentives for language learning across the society, and it often cannot resolve the conflicts over the relative curricular priority of various disciplines in terms of national needs.

But these are comparatively trivial problems, particularly in the context of literacy teaching where there are two massive problems. In some instances, although literacy may be inculcated in some segment of the population, no literature exists over which literacy can be applied. That has certainly been the case in Ethopia and the Sudan, where huge efforts have been made to promulgate the national languages, but literacy loss is very high because, beyond the school materials through which literacy is taught, there is virtually nothing else to read, and there is, among a population living at the subsistence level, little motivation to use literacy under the best of circumstances (Freire 1970). Something of the same sort occurs in Alaska with respect to those Native American languages for which the currently used orthography has only been worked out in the past ten or fifteen years. Among many challenges, the development of curriculum materials in Alaskan Native languages is a major one.

The second problem has to do with the language that is taught, and it is in the context of this question that the process/product dichotomy can be profitably discussed. Where process-based literacy instruction is employed, it is a common practice to encourage learners to keep journals intended to facilitate the writing of narratives and descriptions. There is ample evidence in the literature that the skills involved in creating narrative and descriptive text is of little use (Martin 1990, Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987) in the creation of what Eggington has identified as "power" language. As he puts it:

> ...programs which attempt to raise literacy levels of individuals from predominantly oral societies can succeed [only] to a certain extent. Individual functional literacy may be achieved. However, often functional literacy can be defined as attaining a degree of literacy in society which would allow one to function in that society to the extent that the societal power structures will permit. Functional literacy alone will not provide individual and group power to an

> oppressed [or isolated] people....There are many oral or oral-residual non-native English-speaking minority groups who daily face examples of institutional racism and insensitivity. These people are disempowered, but they lack the tools to combat the oppression they may feel....The adaptation of key literate-culture values would enable these people to mount a campaign that might eventually lead to the minority group's gaining more control over their lives.... [Language teachers]...can do much more than teach basic survival or functional literacy skills. [They] can teach the "secret" language, the literacy of power (1990:16).

In the case of the Alaskan Native people and other populations speaking languages other than English (LOTE), some level of literacy in English no doubt has been achieved, but there are likely to be two serious problems. On the one hand, English literacy may not be retained; although English certainly has a rich literary tradition, the texts available in English may have little meaning for the Native American people and other populations speaking LOTEs because those texts represent a culture alien to them. On the other hand, it is likely that the English literacy available to the Native American people and various other populations speaking LOTEs is not a literacy which includes the language of power. In this case, frustration is simply increased because individual members of the community may have access to English, but despite that access they perceive themselves powerless to influence their own affairs since native English-speakers use an English to which many of them do not have access, and therefore they cannot control or modify the structures of their society. This is not a new problem; it has already been studied in Mexico (Heath 1972, Patthey 1989) and elsewhere, but the fact that it is understood does not prevent it from being reiterated.

The other side of the coin is the development of a capability to represent those Native American languages that do not have an established orthography in written form. With all due respects to the important work of the Alaska Native Language Center and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, quite aside from the technical difficulties involved in such a project (e.g., the difficulty of finding an appropriate orthography that represents the phonological reality of the language, the difficulty of identifying the lexicon and of capturing the morphology, the difficulty of describing the grammar, the difficulty of achieving sufficient concensus among native speakers to permit standardized pedagogical grammars and dictionaries to be compiled and published, the cost of publication and dissemination, etc.), there is the possibility that some registers

of written English are not normally present in some Native American languages and in a variety of other LOTEs spoken in Alaska, and that some oral registers of these several languages are not present in English. This raises the problem of adaptation of the language and its ambient culture to the kinds of phenomenological realities relevant in English. (The reverse is not likely to be perceived as a problem.) At this point, one is no longer concerned with a linguistic matter; once the description of the languages exists, the problem becomes social and political. And, since it is likely, over time, that Native American languages, other LOTEs widely spoken in Alaska, and English will undergo natural internal change at different rates and in different directions, it may be necessary to think of some sort of permanent "language academy" which will constantly keep track of changes and steer the smaller languages in ways that will allow them to maintain a proper fit with the major language with which they must interact to survive. If one thinks of a language academy, one must think of the kinds of individuals who will work in such an academy; there is limited probability that large numbers of the populations speaking LOTEs in Alaska will be prepared immediately to undertake such work (except perhaps as informants), and as a consequence it remains likely that the fate of these people, even in the most intimate domains, will be in the hands of others (who may be right-thinking and altruistic, but who are, after all, participants in the native-English speaking culture).

And thus the problem of the dichotomy between process and product remains unresolved; it does not change only because instruction concerns literacy in an L2 rather than literate competence in an L1. While there is much to be said for process instruction, the fact remains that, at least in the context of power language, product is terribly important because novice literates who want to access the structures of a literate culture need to understand the forms and functions of such genres as meeting minutes, formal parliamentary motions, letters to the editor, reports to gov. legal appeals and the range of other genres that in fact permit access to the power structure and without which novice literates remain merely functional literates. Perhaps equally important is the recognition of the depersonalization of language in the power context. Native American children and a variety of children speaking LOTEs in Alaska will come to school fully possessed of the private language of the family and the community; in all likelihood, schooling will increase their sophistication in that variety and may given them access to a comparable code in English, but it is unlikely that it will give them access to the depersonalized institutional code of the power structure, both because the educational system is not designed to achieve that goal and because it is not in the immediate interests of English speakers to have members of

minorities competent in that code. The fact remains, as Pattey-Chavez (1990: Ch.2, p.6) has suggested, that "...the linguistic tool is [*not*] suited to its dialectic function."

What Can Be Done?

Alaska is a multilingual community in which some 175 languages are spoken. Some of those languages represent populations which were resident in Alaska before English speakers came; others represent populations which have migrated to Alaska more recently to participate in the opportunities available here. It is estimated that one in seven Alaskans is illiterate, though it is unclear whether that figure represents the absence of an ability to read and write in English only, and it is unclear how the ability to read and write is defined. An individual who can shop in a supermarket, deciphering product labels and price tags, or an individual who is fully able to read and write in a language other than English but not in English, or an individual who is able to read and write gang grafitto (which has a complex morphology and grammar of its own, though it is at variance with the morphology and grammar of standard English and is written on a pavement or on a wall rather than on paper) may represent levels of literacy which may or may not be include. It is believed that "growing numbers of high school graduates...are not ready for entering the work force because they lack basic reading, computation, language, and societal skills" (*The demographics of Alaska's schools--COMM686: 2*). It is not clear, however, what skills these individuals lack or why those skills are considered "basic," and it is not clear why reading and language should be treated as separate matters. It is not clear how that conclusion was arrived at; there are potentially many reasons why individuals would choose not to enter, or would be precluded from entering, the work force that are unrelated to the causes given. Although existing programs are variously described as "bilingual," they are largely really transitional, since their objective invariably is to make learners able to function in English. (But this problem is pervasive in the United States.) In my view, the term *bilingual* means the ability to function in two languages for everybody, but I am, regrettably, unaware of many such programs anywhere in the U. S., though Canada has succeeded in mounting some such programs. In part, then, the problem is semantic, because the key terms are not sufficiently defined. But there are other issues that need to be addressed.

To be realistic, it is likely that some fifteen of the most important Native American languages of Alaska "...will probably be extinct within a lifetime, by about the year 2055" (Krauss 1980:53). It is also important to note that English is, at this moment, the most important language in the world. According to the International Federation on Documentation (FID), some 85% of all the scientific and technical

information available in the world today is available only in English, and the proportion is rapidly increasing. It is apparent that English continues to crowd out other smaller languages, not just in Alaska, but in many parts of the world. It is apparent that it is virtually impossible to do without English in the modern world, but it is also apparent that the most strenuous efforts are required to prevent the accelerated death of Native American languages and the disappearance of the cultures they represent. While the teaching of literacy in English is important for survival in contemporary U. S. society and for entry into the larger international culture, it is the case that the exclusive teaching of literacy in English is destructive of the cultures of minority groups subsumed within the larger English-speaking culture. Genuine bilingual education is critical to the survival of other communities in Alaska--and by genuine bilingual education I do not mean transitional programs; rather, I mean programs designed to provide continuing instruction in the minority language--what Australia's Aboriginal people call "two-way education." But intelligent language planning is required as well, because a language (or a set of languages) cannot be preserved only by the education sector; the preservation and promotion of LOTEs must pervade the society. Government must require fluency in one or more LOTEs for entry into the Civil Service; government must provide tax incentives to businesses and industries which employ speakers of LOTEs; government must encourage the use of LOTEs in the postal system, and government must support the use of LOTEs on radio and television, securing some segments of the broadcast day to the exclusive use of LOTEs. These steps are not trivial, nor are they inexpensive. But until minority people are represented in government to a significant degree, these steps are not likely to occur. To some extent, the responsibility falls back on the education sector; it has the responsibility to demystify English and to make the power codes of English available to minority people rather than settling for teaching functional literacy. The education sector must convince children in very practical ways that a knowledge of English is useful, that a knowledge of their ancestral language is also useful, and that together the knowledge of the two codes will give them alternative ways of dealing with the complexity of the world in which they live. The new "Outcomes for Public Education" constitute a start in the right direction, but only a start. Much remains to be done. A critical question lies in the ways in which the education sector will determine that the proposed outcomes are in fact occurring. To the extent that the system employs assessment instruments that discriminate against minority segments of the population, the total community will always fall short of the objectives, increasing numbers of minority children will be excluded from educational opportunity, and the well-known

social problems of the community will increase. Because I do not physically live here, because I am not a citizen here, because I am not a tax-payer here, because I am not a parent here, because I am not even well informed as a linguist of the problems that exist here, I cannot tell Alaskans what to do. As an alien, I can see the problems from a different perspective, and I can point to what I perceive to be errors or misinterpretations. I have tried to tell you about my perceptions, but the rest is up to you.

NOTES:

[1]I gratefully acknowledge the generous assistance of Anne Kessler of the Alaska Department of Education in the preparation of this paper.

[2]Fowles, John. 1974. Poor Koko. *The Ebony Tower.* New York: The New American Library. 135-176. [Signet.]

[3]The terms *literate* and *illiterate* are being used here as though they represented the sole extremes of a continuum. In actual fact, there are many terms that should be invoked, and each term needs to be applied in the context of a particular language; e.g., an individual living in Los Angeles may be able to read and write Spanish at a basic level, may be able to read and write English at the literary level, may be able to read Greek at a level adequate to participation in Church services, may be able to use a computer, may be able to use mathematics at the level of geometry, algebra, and trigonometry but not calculus, may be able to read a little in Portugese and French. Such an individual may be said to be *literate* in all of those languages, but obviously the single term *literate* does not suffice to describe the various skills the individual possesses. By the same token, the same individual may be said to be *illiterate* or *semi-literate* in several of the languages named, but the single term *illiterate* does not suffice to describe with any degree of accuracy what this individual actually is able to do, and in addition it carries a regrettable stigma. Children who have yet to learn literacy in a literate society may be designated *pre-literate*; adults who acquired literacy early in life but who have lost it for lack of anything to read may be called *post-literate*, and individuals who have comparable shared literacy in two languages may be called *bi-literate* (or conceivably *multi-literate* if more than two languages are implicated). Individuals who possess sufficient competence to read safety signs, road signs, and addresses, or who are able to read in a very narrow subject area (e.g., chemistry) in which they are fully literate in some other language, but who cannot read a newspaper or a basic textbook in any other subject may be designated *semi-literate* or *functionally literate*. The point is, simply, that the dichotomy *literate* vs. *illiterate* is too coarse to be of much use in serious discussion of the issues.

[4]One of the most dramatic punishments that human beings could inflict on each other was the cutting out of the tongue; such an act removed the individual so abused from human contact, particularly in the time before literacy was wide spread. Indeed, such a punishment created a monster so repugnant to other human beings that the likelihood of interbreeding was essentially eliminated.

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